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To Blog or Not To Blog — Why Scholars Blog

by **Pat Sabosik** (General Manager, ACI Scholarly Blog Index; Phone: 203-816-8256) <psabosik@aci.info>

There are a lot of reasons why scholars blog, not the least of which is to advance their research and refine their craft of writing and to clearly communicate their ideas in their field. Digital presence and reputation are also key drivers, especially for younger scholars and scientists. Their digital footprint will be bigger and broader than today's scholars. Scholarly blogs, once considered ephemeral, are now becoming part of the scholarly record and an important component of a scholar's work. Let's look further into these topics.

Digital Footprint

Young scientists coming into the field are digital natives. They have an affinity for technology, are socially connected, and are driving a sharing economy. Blogging and a range of Internet-enabled social connections like Facebook, Twitter, Academia.edu or ResearchGate are a regular part of their lives. A social presence is important and can help scholars gain recognition in their field. Scholars need a digital presence to be discoverable; that's where their peers, mentors, and funding agencies will find them. Using social media smartly, particularly blogging where commentary can be expanded, can help benefit the young scholars and bring attention to their work.

Digital Reputation

Digital commentary has to have substance as young scholars build their reputation as burgeoning experts in their fields. Commenting on trends in a thoughtful way through a scholar's blog goes a long way towards building that digital reputation and showing mastery of an idea or topic — essentially, what does a scholar want to be known for? Maintaining profiles and activity on key social media resources becomes important as scholars build their digital resume and social presence.

Interdisciplinary Scholarship

How many scholars actually use blogs or social media? Will scholarly blogs be read and referenced? According to a **Pew – AAAS** study, "47% of AAAS scientists have used blogs or social media to discuss or follow science, 24% have blogged, 19% regularly follow blogs and 12% regularly follow Twitter in order to keep up-to-date." Given the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of science, nearly 92% of AAAS scientists, in the same **Pew** study, "read a journal article outside of their primary specialty area in the past year and 57% published a study with a multidisciplinary team." The same use of blogs and interdisciplinary practices can be traced to scholars in the social sciences and the humanities.



Funding and Publishing

In the same **Pew** study, 83% of AAAS scientists report "that obtaining federal research funding is harder today [2014] than it was five years ago." Industry funding and private foundation funding are also down. "Concerns about adequate funding are widely shared among scientists of all disciplines and employment sectors."

Limits in funding have put restrictions on research and potentially the number of traditional outlets for publishing research results. In fast-developing fields like the life sciences, delays in the traditional publishing cycle make research results seem out-of-date when they actually are published. Couple these trends with the digital native behavior of young scholars and the scholarly blog becomes an attractive outlet for publication while they work through funding channels for more traditional sources of funding and publication and build their digital footprint.

With these demographic and economic shifts in research and scholarly publishing, blogs are an excellent vehicle for scholars to use to document their research and build their reputations through expert commentary, stay current on trends in their fields, and remain in touch with their readers. Scholarly blogs can be broad in scope or as specific as a journal article reporting on research outcomes. Scholarly blogs are at the forefront of their fields reporting on trends in advance of, or in some cases instead of, journal articles and can be found side-by-side with journal articles in the major discovery engines such as **ExLibris Primo**, **Ebsco Discovery Service**, **OCLC World Cat** and **ProQuest Summon**. This next generation of scholars will continue to push the boundaries of scholarly communication through blogs and other forms of scholarly discourse. 🌿

*Pat Sabosik is the General Manager of the **ACI Scholarly Blog Index**, an editorially selected and curated collection of scholarly blogs covering all academic disciplines. Pat will be moderating a panel discussion: "Why We Blog – Reshaping Research, Captivating Tales from Academic Bloggers." During the upcoming **Charleston Conference** October 31st to November 5th, in Charleston, SC.*

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@Brunning: People & Technology

At the Only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

by **Dennis Brunning** (Associate University Librarian, Arizona State University) <dennis.brunning@gmail.com>

Annals of Analytics: Usage Data

Library use is like **Donald Trump's** delegates. We've got plenty but somehow they get no respect.

My own library drowns in numbers. We've got millions and millions of article downloads. eBook use isn't too shabby either.

Why be surprised, the industry and its customers, librarians, are a massive knowledge engine.

Yet ask anyone in academia, even high mucky mucks, and everyone says they get all their information from Google. Thank you.

What's the deal?

Well, borrowing from **David Weinberger's** observation that there is a library size hole in the Internet we can state a corollary. There is a huge leak in publisher Websites, flowing from Google, pooling in Dropbox and other cloud redoubt.

Check with your usage people, I'll bet numbers, especially STM downloads, are huge. Who is even tracking views? Requests arrive from many places, mainly Google Scholar. So why doesn't this use lift all ships, that is, get our users to applaud us?



Our users, myself included, search Google and find much library content on the open Web. We can blame Sci-Hub, but c'mon, it's much bigger than that.

Sci-Hub easy? You'd have to be a professional skip tracer to find it. Find it at best, it's bad aggregation. It's about as easy to use as the "tear here" instructions on convenience store aspirin packets.

Our stuff is easier to open than bitty aspirin packs, often (sorry OA advocates) as economically priced, and more often than not the results of a highly efficient search engine.

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